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183
AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

S B U R G,

1883,

BY

ALEXANDER S. WEBB,

AT THE

ERECUTION OF THE 72^D PA. VOLS. MONUMENT.

ALSO,

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

72^D REGIMENT,

BY

CHARLES H. BANES,

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT-GENERAL AND BREVET LIEUT.-COLONEL.

PHILADELPHIA:
PORTER & COATES.
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PHOTOGRAPHED BY TIPTON,

GETTYSBURG, PA.

SEVENTY-SECOND PENN'A. VOL. MONUMENT,
SCENE OF PICKETTS CHARGE.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

G E T T Y S B U R G,

August 27, 1883,

BY

GEN. ALEXANDER S. WEBB,
II

AT THE

DEDICATION OF THE 72^D PA. VOLS. MONUMENT.

ALSO,

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

72^D REGIMENT,

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COLLINS PRINTING HOUSE,
705 Jayne Street.

1892
E. J. L.

United States—preserved by the loving hands of those who cherish the saddest recollections of our late war—are the lasting monuments we have reared to testify to our assurance that it was God himself who preserved this Union; they are the pledges we have given that we will be its conservators.

We, therefore, approach in reverential respect and affectionate regret the graves of our comrades who have fallen, and, with tender recollection of our last companionship with them, we drop the tear of pride—yes, but of glorious pride—when we recall the time and the circumstance of their death—the time of our own salvation.

And why build monuments and pay loving respect and especial tribute to the memory of these men? Why claim for them a little more of these sad testimonials of our devotion than we give to others?

If from these few words of mine we may find left with us the conviction that these cold marbles are not yet sufficient to record, with anything like fidelity, the magnitude of the services rendered by the men who fought on this spot, we will have done no more than simple justice to their patriotism in this our act of veneration.

It is proper, therefore, that it should devolve upon one who was present with you in our glorious defence of “the main point of the Union line upon which General Lee ordered his columns to advance.” This is from Longstreet himself. It is proper, I repeat, to write that of which he can speak as an actor in the fray, with the certainty that no one will hereafter gainsay a clear statement of what we may all now testify to, and with the feeling that, in performing this labor of love, he does nothing more than pay a proper tribute to the memory of these who died a soldier’s death while rendering to their country a service for which no adequate recompense can be or will ever be made, either to their heirs or to their companions still living.

For thus it is, and thus it always must be, with Republics; so

that, expecting nothing and seeking nothing from our Government, we come to engrave on imperishable marble our tribute to the fallen in your old 72d Pennsylvania, knowing, as none others know, the time, the circumstance of their final devotion and gallantry, and death.

You will, therefore, gladly, no doubt, dwell with me for a few moments while I endeavor to place before you the facts and the circumstances which gave to the old clump of trees we so long defended, and which we never lost, the well-deserved name of "the turning point in the war."

And who were these men whose graves are now so signally honored, and whose death we crown with historical tribute?

Enlisted in Philadelphia in August, 1861, by Col. D. W. C. Baxter, they served under our old chief, McClellan, on the Peninsula, rendering signal service at Fair Oaks, where, under the War Horse Sumner and gallant Sedgwick, they came to the support of General Heintzelman, and with Sully and others checked the Rebel advance at a moment when all was confusion and much was panic. Thence to Peach Orchard and Savage Station, under their still honored and respected Gen. W. W. Burns, they passed to Glendale, displaying such staying qualities, and exhibiting such results of their discipline and drill, that they, together with their other regiments of the brigade, secured the promotion of their well-trying commander of the 69th, Joshua T. Owen, to a brigadier-generalship. Tried and exposed to shot and shell at Malvern Hill, they rested at Harrison's Landing—veterans—with a history of which they might well be proud. Surviving the disasters and mismanagements of the second Bull Run, they covered the retreat from Chantilly to the defenses of Washington under Generals Sully and Sumner in person.

And now we ask your attention to their next service, since some writers have been misled, and these men, who, on this spot, fought with me, and made me known as their commander, have the right to demand for their reputation the services of my pen and voice.

Antietam was a scene of their success and of their bloody loss. It was not to them at any time a source of discomfort or of loss of reputation. Let Dunkers' Church, had it a voice, relate how they passed by it across the open field far, far into the wood, arrested only by the personal order of Sumner himself. Count the missing and the slain, and recall the promotion of Wistar, and then ask if all this can be, and this regiment and this brigade be charged with remaining in the rear or retiring without success.

At this time I cannot stop to dwell upon Fredericksburg, where their services are acknowledged and recorded. Time fails me, and I hasten on to this historic field.

The battle of Chancellorsville, May 2d to May 5, 1863, whereby Gen. Joseph Hooker lost much of his hard-earned reputation, was to the Northern patriot so severe a blow—and to the Southern Rebel so just a cause for pride and elation—that it is not a matter of wonder that Gen. R. E. Lee, taking into consideration the situation at Vicksburg, and almost certainty of the surrender of that city to Gen. Grant, determined to “counterbalance that impending disaster” by striking at once at the existence of the Army of the Potomac, and our possession of the Capitol at Washington by invading the North.

In matters international, it is generally customary, and probably wise, to dissemble in regard to our feelings towards all nations—but it will be better for us, if we study well the relations of the foreign powers to the United States during this portion of the year 1863—before we give way to any very strong feelings of reverence or esteem for their policies, their interest in, or their appreciation of our institutions. And, after such study, if we find that the neutrality of the government of England (save on the part of her Queen and Prince Consort), was shallow and pretentious; the position of France positively hostile; all other nations, except Russia, inclined to rejoice in our defeats, it may be well, on such occasions as these, to give way to that which is the honest expression of a reasonable distrust of all their pretensions, past, present, and future, and thus leave behind for the careful consideration of our posterity the soldier’s maxim:—

“In peace prepare for war.”

That dissembling policy strongly characterized the condition of affairs so far as regards our foreign relations from May 3d to July 4, 1863; but Vicksburg and Gettysburg made it necessary for all these powers to continue dissimulation indefinitely.

It may thus be understood that Lee did not lack good and sufficient reasons for, and moral support in beginning his invasion, and he seems to have felt confident, and reasonably so, that with a force of 75,000 men, placed north of Baltimore and Washington—cutting or menacing all their communications North, East, and West—he would be in a position to receive sufficient aid from the Northern Copperheads and the foreign neutrals, to warrant the claim from his Rebel “Government,” that England should throw aside her mask, and acknowledge “The (so-called) Confederacy of the South.”

What a day-dream! With English guns, English Shenandoahs, English moral support, and now English loans. What was to stand between Rebel hopes, and Rebel success?

Just one power, Omnipotent in council, irresistible in the field—

“The will of God.”

Why relate to you the incidents of the march from the Rappahannock to Gettysburg. You all took part in it, and remember it, and you care for little other than the remembrance of the facts as you now recall them. It is sufficient for us to repeat that, July first, we found the Rebels here, and that we knew that they had come to stay, if the right hand of the Government, the force in whom the people of the North had their sole dependence did not drive them out. The people knew the qualities of the Army of the Potomac. They relied upon it, and not in vain.

And now we near our subject, “the value of the sacrifice of these men—at this point of all others on this field—on the second and third days of the battle of Gettysburg.”

For nearly two months the disagreement between the War Department and General Hooker had been steadily approaching that point at which the resignation or relief of this General from the command of the Army was at last inevitable, and on the 29th of June, Major General George Gordon Meade was placed in command of the troops, who were destined under Divine Providence to drive Lee forever from Northern soil.

Bid not farewell to Joseph Hooker without expressing for his memory that meed of praise which should be his—by reason of his services from the Peninsula to Gettysburg. He was willing and anxious to fight at all times—was an able, impetuous commander in the presence of the enemy—was a warm friend of any one he considered a good soldier, and an able man in the field; but was most unwise in the selection of his surroundings.

His was a sad fate. Stripped of his unwise counsellors, and surrounded by good men and able staff officers, he would have ceased to have been his own worst enemy. He is dead. His faults lie buried with him. He was a courageous, ambitious, fearless commander—an organizer of men, a fast friend.

How can we of the Army of the Potomac speak in adequate terms of our last beloved commander, General Geo. G. Meade!

He who addresses you, as you well know, knew him as a soldier

as intimately as any one, serving with him night and day, in battle and in camp—how can he express to you one tithe of his love and respect for him!

The man, who was the first and only man who ever met Lee in his pride and strength in pitched battle, and defeated him, has, I know, been assailed for years by those whose military history will bear but little examination. And recently they have found a mouth-piece quite willing to repeat, without sufficient experience or any personal knowledge, the scandals to which these writers gave life, only after their final deposition from active commands or responsible duty in an army, to whose success, against Lee, they could have added, and did add nothing.

But George G. Meade was, and is known to have been the soul of honor, the Christian soldier and patriot, the modest, kind, scholarly friend, to all who approached him for counsel and support, the successful chief of the grandest army this continent ever has seen, or ever will see. How dare they tell us—on their hearsay—that such a man deliberately evaded telling the whole truth before the Committee of Congress, which was endeavoring to fasten upon him (by his own evidence), these malignant aspersions of those discharged, relieved, or retired officers—men who well knew that under such a commander as Meade, all the abuses practised during Gen. Hooker's rule, to which they owed their advancement, must cease. Gen. Meade then declared under oath, and called upon his God to witness to his then repeated declaration, that not one word of their charges against him was, or ever had been, true.

Strong indeed is the testimony of Sedgwick, Howard, Newton, Sykes, Williams, and Gibbon, and A. S. Williams, who were present at the Council of War, held July 2d, against Pleasonton and Doubleday, who were not present, and Slocum, who thought Gen. Meade said that, "Gettysburg was no place to fight a battle." Stronger yet, for the truth of history, is the evident inability of Gen. Birney to charge General Meade with any other fault than "seeming indisposed to fight, or hazard a battle on any except the most favorable terms." Strong indeed, on the side of Meade, is the testimony of Gens. Warren, Hunt, and Seth Williams, his trusted staff officers; and finally, and last of all, and most powerful against the influence of the authors of these charges, are the circumstances surrounding their separation from this army, and the natural result therefrom, that some, or all of them, have been finally permitted to sink into oblivion after

having failed utterly in their endeavors to detract from the well-earned reputation of Geo. G. Meade. Their punishment is well deserved.

This Christian soldier, on June 28th, took command of our dear old army, and, when he sent forth the following address to us, we well knew that he and we had come to succeed here or be sacrificed:—

“By direction of the President of the United States, I hereby assume command of the Army of the Potomac. As a soldier, in obeying this order—an order totally unexpected and unsolicited—I have no promises or pledges to make. The country looks to this army to relieve it from the devastation and disgrace of a hostile invasion. Whatever fatigues and sacrifices we may be called upon to undergo, let us have in view constantly the magnitude of the interests involved, and let each man determine to do his duty, leaving to an all-controlling Providence the decision of the contest.”

And believing in this all-controlling Providence, and relying on the skill, the soldierly ability, and the guidance of such a commander, the Army of the Potomac moved to this spot, ready to determine here in these open fields whether or not it was yet the will of God that the Union should be saved.

And now for a brief allusion to the battle and to the part these fallen heroes took in it. Pardon me if I relate something concerning the details of it, which you may know even better than myself. For the sake of the truth in history bear with me for a little while.

This three days' contest was a constant recurrence of scenes of self-sacrifice, and of exhibitions of wise prescience, on the part of Meade, Reynolds, and Howard on the first day; of Sykes, Warren, Weed, Hancock, and Geo. S. Greene, the man who saved our right flank, on the second; and on the part of all engaged on the third and last day. Lee was ever active and pushed us sorely.

The list of dead and wounded among our higher officers stands an ever present witness to the severity of these actions, and their loss was indeed to us, who had served with and had learned to respect and follow these men, most terrible.

The history of the battle has been told and retold until we are all familiar with the well-established particulars of it, as well as with most of the claims made by those who have not as yet been able to agree as to whether they were posted by themselves, by their commanders, or by individual skill and forethought, in localities calculated to repel Lee's and also any other army of the Rebel Confederacy.

In the presence of the graves of our dead let us repeat that which

I wrote of you about twenty years ago, sustained as I have been in my statements by the best of our historians, and conscious of my willingness and desire to acknowledge the rights and the claims of any and every soldier who may have participated in our triumph.

Men of the Philadelphia Brigade held this position for the whole period of the battle, and were never driven from one rod or foot of it under any circumstance, save when the two companies of the 71st, to which I refer in my report, others of the same regiment having been already removed to afford a space for artillery fire, were fairly overwhelmed, and driven back 100 to 150 feet by a mass of the enemy, now known to be equal in volume to a full brigade. Some men of the other brigades of our division passed in rear of our 72d Regiment to its right, and, after the assault, to our front, who were not at any moment in the immediate face of the Rebels, and who yet claim to have passed through that regiment. They did not.

Justice—simple justice—to these, our dead, requires this declaration, and if I am to-day brought in direct conflict of statement with some of those who so patriotically endeavored to assist us on July 3d, it is not through a want of appreciation of their efforts. God knows that I was grateful enough to them; but it is simply through my sense of duty to the memory of these, over whose graves we hold this service.

In loving commemoration of their devotion and daring, I must restrict then these claims.

You were posted, as you will remember, early on July 2d, on this ridge,¹ and on the right of our division, by order of Brigadier-General Gibbon, our commander. Our right rested on Lieut. A. H. Cushing's Battery "A," 4th U. S. Artillery; our left on Battery "B," 1st Rhode Island Artillery, Lieut. T. Fred. Brown commanding. The 69th Regiment was placed behind a fence, a little in advance of the ridge—the remaining three regiments of the brigade under cover of the hill in the rear. Brown's Battery was in the course of the day removed to the front of the 69th Regiment. It remained at this point until the assault at 6.30 P. M.

¹ Extending from the left of the cemetery, and falling off gradually towards Round Top, Granite Ridge formed the natural location for a line of battle. Defence there was none, except the low stone walls marking the field boundaries. In the centre of this line, and just below the crest, a small grove of peculiar shaped trees gave prominence to the landscape, and it was this copse which was selected by General Longstreet as the point of direction for his columns of attack.

Your position was one well calculated to render you available for the work before you.

Colonel Charles H. Banes, our adjutant-general of brigade—than whom there is no better staff officer or military adviser, nor more self-possessed man on the hottest field—has, in his account of this day's fighting, written as follows:—

“Immediately after assuming this position, a detail, ordered from each regiment, was advanced as skirmishers beyond the Emmettsburg road, and parallel with the Rebel line of battle on Seminary Ridge. This disposition was scarcely completed before the enemy opened with sharp-shooters and artillery. During the day both of the batteries on the flanks of the brigade engaged those of the enemy, the shelling wounding but few on our side.”

From our position, which gave us a commanding view of our front and left, we beheld the whole of the unfortunate advance of General Sickles and his subsequent discomfiture, and we knew at the time that it would devolve upon General Hancock's command to repulse the charge or assault the rebels were certain to make. Hancock had command of the 1st, 2d, and 3d Corps, and it required all his energy and military promptness to save our broken line on that day, using for this purpose every man at his disposal.

We cannot pause to speak in fitting terms of the deaths of Generals Weed and Vincent, of Colonel O'Rorke and Captain Hazlett in saving for us our position on Little Round Top, or of the sacrifice of Colonels Willard, Cross, and Zook, of our corps, in saving the Third Corps from total route. Their names have been handed down to posterity as those of our dead heroes of Gettysburg whose deaths ensured to us our victory at the end. No efforts of the very best and bravest of our Generals could stem the tide of Longstreet's attack, supported as he was by the “best fighting material in the rebel army” under Wilcox, Barksdale, Perry, and Wright. Not even the soldierly qualities of the brave Humphreys could secure more to the 3d Corps than a sullen retreat. Thus were we of necessity brought into action at about six o'clock P. M. on the 2d, and well was the honor of Philadelphia upheld by your regiments.

“Our skirmishers had been holding their line and engaging the enemy during the past hour.”

“The enemy made the assault of the 2d at about 6.10 P. M. Their line of battle advanced beyond one gun of Brown's Battery, receiving at that point the fire of the 69th, of the 71st advanced to the support of the 69th, and of the 72d and 106th, which had previously

been moved to the left by command of Major-General Hancock. Colonel Baxter of the 72d, while gallantly leading his command, was at this time wounded. The enemy halted, manœuvred, and fell back, pursued by the 106th, 72d, and part of the 71st. The 72d and 106th followed them to the Emmettsburg road, capturing and sending to the rear about two hundred and fifty prisoners, among whom were one colonel, five captains, and fifteen lieutenants."

During the first assault we lost eighteen officers, and probably 200 men killed and wounded. We were thus well prepared for the work before us, and we were thus soon to be tried as men seldom had been or have since been in the presence of their fellow soldiers.

Let us turn then to the consideration of the part we were about to take in the final contest for the maintenance of Rebel strength north of Washington.

There is a point to which in any pursuit of life one may attain success beyond which he may not pass. With the sanguine hopes of his Government, and the moral support of most of the rulers of the nations of the earth, R. E. Lee, the leader of the Rebel forces, was permitted to reach this, but till then but little known Pennsylvania town—only to find that here all hope of success was to be lost, all assurances of carrying the war into the Northern States to be proven false. Bitter, bitter failure! Thus far shalt thou go.

Gettysburg in the political sense was, and is now throughout the world known to be the Waterloo of the Rebellion. And thus it was of necessity most bloody. Both sides knew the importance of the results, and were prepared then and there to decide the issue.

For two days Lee had contended to determine to carry some weak point in Meade's line, and without success. He had crushed in our advance on the first, had driven back Sickles on the second, had almost turned both right and left on that day, and had retired only to determine upon some point upon which to renew his assaults.

Once successful with one of his strong columns, he felt that the day would be his, and that the first step would be taken towards opening correspondence with the Rebels of the North. And now the question in which you are most interested was to be settled, and as Longstreet has himself given testimony it was settled in your favor. Your clump of trees was to be taken, and to be assaulted by the flower of the Rebel host. This decision gave you your place in history; this stone wall its prominence.

Before describing the main assault and its failure, let us refer for

the last time to some of the reports and histories which have been written with the desire to wrest your laurels from you.

One writer thus describes the action of the enemy "after they found his" (the writer's) "command too much for them." "I moved my command by the right flank to the foot of the 'bluff,' delivering our fire as we marched, and keeping between the enemy and the object of his enterprise" (*i. e.*, us). "He succeeded in reaching the fence at the foot of the bluff, but with ranks broken, and his men evidently disheartened. Some succeeded in getting over the fence," etc. etc.

This one we should be thankful to. He was the savior of the clump. Can you find the bluff?

And now another: "The charge was aimed directly at my command, but owing apparently to the firm front shown them, the enemy diverged midway and came upon the line on my right." Then he took them in flank and probably without loss, captured not Lee, but the main portion of those Lee had dared to point towards him, "the larger portion of them surrendered and marched in not as conquerors but as captives." This all took place on our left, and beyond the position of those who really were with us in our hour of need.

But in pleasant contrast let us look to the right. There was "old" Alex. Hays, a glorious fighter, probably a man without a newspaper in his interest. He tells of his front without one attempt to take from any one their laurels fairly won. Thus he writes:—

"Their march" (the enemy's) "was as steady as if impelled, marching unbroken by our artillery. . . . When within one hundred yards of our line, the fire of our men could no longer be restrained" . . . "before the smoke of our first volley had cleared away, the enemy, in dismay and consternation, were seeking safety in flight."

With our right protected by Alex. Hays (than whom there was on that field no braver, and but few more observing officers), and with our left reinforced by Hall. Colonel Norman J. Hall commanding the 1st Brigade of our own division, I do not think we either looked for or asked for any one to dishearten the enemy before they reached us, nor did we expect any one to interpose their forces between ourselves and Pickett. Had these latter been near enough to the rebel line to know Pickett's men, they would never have permitted this absurd claim to have been made for them.

It seems a little hard to be forced to state at this late day just what was the "point of attack of Longstreet's force." But, in self-defence, it must be done. Will you accept Longstreet's own state-

ments, and that of Colonel Harrison, General Pickett's Adjutant-General and Inspector-General, or that of General E. P. Alexander, of the Rebel artillery? Bachelder says: "While visiting the field with him at Gettysburg, the copse of trees on General Webb's front was the point on which the troops were directed to advance." "These trees being relieved in clean outline against the sky, when seen from the Rebel line, formed an unmistakable landmark."

Lieutenant-General James Longstreet spent several hours, in 1868, in Mr. Walker's studio, examining the painting of the Battle of Gettysburg, not then completed. After looking at it closely for some time, he turned with a sad smile to Bachelder, and said: "Colonel, there's where I came to grief."

"I have called your assault the 'tidal wave,' and the copse of trees in the centre of the picture, the 'high-water mark' of the rebellion," said Bachelder. "You said rightly," Longstreet responded; "we were successful until then. From THAT point we retreated, and continued to recede, and never again made successful headway."

At a dinner given not more than five or six years ago, General Hancock, in reply to a toast given to him, and referring to his success at Gettysburg, said: "In every battle there must be one point upon which the success of either side must hinge. At such a position every earnest or brave General must hope to be posted. It was General Webb's good fortune to be posted at that point at Gettysburg, and he held it." Have you any doubts remaining in your minds to-day in regard to the culminating point on this field? Here, therefore, we claim were sacrificed the lives of these men, to whom all must give the highest honor, through force of position and circumstance during the trying day, which decided forever the Rebel claim to rule this country—a claim which had never been more properly asserted, than when spoken in our national Legislature in this wise: 'I shall yet call the roll of my slaves under the shadow of the Bunker Hill monument.'" I refrain from alluding to another author who wrote page after page to prove that those whom we met were exhausted.

The Third Day.

The 106th Regiment had been ordered to our right, to General Howard. They had won sufficient honor with us; they received a glad welcome, and a corresponding praise when parted from us.

Our 69th was on the left at the wall, and in front of the now renowned copse of trees. On their right was most of the 71st Regi-

ment, a portion of it retired to the wall, behind the angle, placing it in echelon with the remainder.

The 72d was posted immediately behind the crest of the mound or hill in support of Cushing's Battery and Hall.

On our right was glorious old fighting Hays, and on our left Hall and Harrow. Our strength was but 1100 men and but 74 officers (of these we were to lose 43 officers and 452 men, of which latter but 47 were missing). As we now consider matters, we had not much more than one full regiment.

We had heard and fully realized the severity of the morning's contest in regaining for our side *Culp's Hill*, abandoned the night before in the darkness. We had rested, but we were not unmindful of the fact that the silence of the enemy forebode some severe and well-planned attack. If not retreating, Lee was to be aggressive.

A About one o'clock, while the men were wondering what would be the next movement in this great Battle, a single Whitworth gun was fired from the left of Seminary Ridge, a distance of three miles. Then followed those signal guns, and at last that terrific fire from the Rebel artillery. Have you ever heard the like? Shell and shot from nearly 150 pieces falling among our batteries and regiments. We had little or no cover save a pile of stones not two feet high. Had the fall of missiles been likened to hail, the picture would not have been overdrawn. A hissing, fiery storm—every conceivable bolt of destruction striking in our midst—the dreadful thud everywhere! Horse and carriage and dismounted gun lying where a little before had stood the Union Battery. The wounded, suffering, and the dying still and quiet in the midst. The calm and brave Cushing and his brother officers of that noble artillery, standing by their remaining pieces to the last—our pride and our glory. When will it cease? When will they charge? for surely this is what it means. Can you not feel yet the heat of that bursting caisson; the stones and sand from that exploded shell? It will never be forgotten. And there in the wood they form "a solid front." Pickett and Pettigrew and Trimble—Virginia and Georgia and North Carolina, Virginia leading—are to take this clump of trees. Ah, well chosen was this gallant band! See them now as their lines descend toward us—our countrymen, but our foes. With all, we cannot be other than proud of our enemies. They come to crown this crest or perish.

Bring us now new batteries! Let Wheeler and Cowan come to replace Woodruff and Cushing. These are to die, but, oh! such deaths, in very contact with the enemy. Let every man know now

that the impending strife is to be for life or death, for Union or defeat.

Two lines of Rebel regiments, possibly 18,000 men, are moving on our line slowly and determinedly. They near the crest. Cushing, wounded, asks to have his remaining gun run down to the fence, and, glorious martyr, wounded, yea, sorely, stands by that piece the very picture of a soldier. Americans can well glory in the achievements of the Cushings.

But Hancock, our glorious Hancock, ever near the front in action, was not to be easily overthrown by this mass of angry foes. He had the old Second corps and Doubleday's Division of the First; and well he knew how to use us! Stannard was to be used to stay the supporting column on the Rebel right, and well he did it. Gates, of Rowley's 1st Brigade, was enabled to assist in this movement. Harrow and Hall, of our own division, were near to help us, and Hays on our right with the 3d Division, with Smith's Brigade, was well able to hold his own.

On, on they come with solid front! line closing in upon line, as their right or left felt the pressure of Hancock's aggressive movements. And now they strike the 69th, under Colonel O'Kane, and a portion of the 71st, under Lieutenant-Colonel Kochersperger, and, halting under the withering fire of these brave men, pressed toward the open part of the wall, in front of the space held formerly by Cushing. Here, Armistead, waving his sword aloft, had rushed in with his men. Here, Cushing had died at his piece. Here, was to be the final struggle for the crest! But this crest was not to be taken from us, if, by self-sacrifice and by individual effort, it could be retained.

Pressed by a wedge-shaped column of Rebels, the right of those who guarded the wall on the left of Cushing was pressed to the rear, but not penetrated or driven to the rear. They were better for defence in their new position. The brigade commander himself pointed out to them the number of the Rebels who had passed to their right, and directed them to fire upon them, and to fight their right and rear.

But past the wall—low enough for Armistead to step over—what had they to meet: First from our right the fire of the companies of the 71st, under Col. R. Penn Smith; then from the front the fire of the 72d Regiment, perfectly organized and in line on this crest, and from our left, and left centre, that of the body of Hall's men, the guard or rear guard under Captain Ford and Lieut. Lynch, of the

106th, which hurried to be with their brigade in the fray, and finally also, the rush of Kochersperger's men pressed right and left. With no hope of success in their front, and no hope of retreat, they surrendered. Arnistead dying—their dead and wounded within our lines—killed and maimed in a hand to hand contest, those in rear had nothing else to do. Hall, Hays, Harrow, did much to aid in securing this result; in every battle it will be and has been in vain to try to claim all the praise and all success for any one brigade or regiment; but I defy you to find a contest in which any one brigade performed more nobly the part assigned to it.

This is no description of this battle at the crest. No man on such an occasion as this can enter into the details of a history which would require the limits of a volume to portray its incidents.

We came to tell of the deeds of those who lie buried here; but pausing, find that the limits of this, my tribute to your patriotism, will not permit of it. Each name has been engraven on some panel. It may be, in what is to-day a place of obscurity; but in the near future I can see that history, so often called unreliable, will—from some efforts such as this—be led to uncover these silent memorials, and in pages emblazoned with the symbols of truth, and breathing forth the imperishable words of Justice, will seek near this spot to relate to the world, the deeds of those unconquered heroes, who gave their lives to their country, in order that the power of the fiat, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther," might be proven to be in things temporal and in things spiritual, the will of Omnipotence.

What words can better describe our feelings than those of our grand President, Abraham Lincoln, delivered on this spot: "The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."

"From these honored dead we take increased devotion to the cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion."

Meade, beloved and honored, has passed from among us; but his name shall live as the hero of Gettysburg.

Lincoln is dead, but we well remember that we laid this, our offering at his feet, acknowledging him to be for that, our National Crisis, the ordained savior of the principles of American Liberty.

Hancock still lives, we give to him his portion of our glory and respect for giving to us his unstinted praise. And can we here forget our citizen friend and companion, J. Warner Johnson, the quiet, thoughtful friend of each and all of us. For his self-sacrifice, God has no doubt rewarded him. The man who shod and clothed some of these

very men, who wisely counselled and befriended so many, who cared for the wounded, who supported the widows, has engraven on our hearts a remembrance we will cherish to the end.

To our brethren of the Army we turn to do us justice. They who on this bloody field saw so much to try their patience and their valor, to them we look, as soldier may look to soldier, to give to the memories of these, our comrades, their places in history. None, none but such brave men can estimate our work; few, few yet live to tell of the intensity and strength of our trial. O'Kane and Tschudy, Duffy, Thompson, and Kelly, Steffan and Dull, McBride, Griffiths and Jones, from their silent graves call for our maintenance of their rights, our cherishing of their reputations and their sacrifices. We will do our part. In this a memorial to all of them, we, rearing this monument to the dead of the 72d Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers, do honor to all.

The Rebel blow at our Unity, and the slave-holders' proud boast that the Northern artisan should yet succumb to their power and influence, found on this spot their death-knell.

The dead knew not, it may be, all that they have done; but they died for us, and for our country. But ere the spirit fled, Heaven grant they saw that not in vain they bled. We approach their graves in reverence and in tears. We now know how much we owe to them. Rest! patriot spirits, Rest! We live to know how great was your sacrifice—how great was our gain. History shall give to you the glory and memory, crowding upon us all that we can recall of your gallantry and worth—will secure to you from us in the future, as now—love, affection, and attachment, on occasions such as these.

You have died that we might live, and this nation since your death honors annually her nation's dead. We decorate in fond remembrance the graves of our nation's sacrificed. We find none who dare to withhold from them these symbols of the nation's gratitude. We speak of our Union dead as of the lost in our families; of their cause for which they died, as of the cause of the salvation of our country and of her institutions; of their services and death as of the sacrifices of her sons, that she might live.

If the spirits of those who slumber here may be allowed to know of this, our tribute to their patriotism; if the spirits of those who sowed, but never reaped; who died for freedom, and for the fulfilling of God's will, may be allowed to commune with us to-day; we, their comrades and their survivors, can do nothing more fitting in our act of consecration of this humble memorial, than here to solemnly renew

our oaths of allegiance to our glorious Union; here to swear that this government, loved, honored, and preserved by us in the past, will be maintained, protected, and conserved by all in the future. God gave and preserved the Union of the United States. Who shall dare to sever us?

Brothers before the war—brothers to-day—we deplore the cause of these sad remembrances; but we well know as few others can, that mementos such as these must be erected, that men may, in the sight of these hallowed graves, recall the errors of the past, and knowing the cost of rebellion against His will—resolve to foster and maintain the principles for which our fathers fought, for which their sons have died.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

72D PENNSYLVANIA VOLUNTEERS.

(PHILADELPHIA FIRE ZOUAVES.)

THE great uprising of the North, consequent upon the failure of the Union army at Bull Run, produced some memorable scenes of patriotism. Citizens of all classes and professions, no longer deluded by the idea of an early settlement of the national question, commenced preparation for the serious work of restoring the supremacy of the Union, with the most patriotic determination and energy. In this work Philadelphia led the advance among the cities of the North, in furnishing men for the armies, clothing and supplies for the troops, hospitals for the wounded, and bountiful refreshments for regiments marching through her streets towards the scene of war.

Among the large number of regiments formed in the city there were four organizations—the 69th, 71st, 72d, and 106th Pennsylvania Volunteers—that were united in one brigade, and maintained this relation during their full term of service. This “Philadelphia Brigade” was continually with the Army of the Potomac, and bore an honorable part in all its marches, sufferings, and battles. Edward D. Baker, a member of the United States Senate, a soldier and statesman, was the father of this command, he having been especially commissioned by President Lincoln to raise the 71st Pennsylvania Volunteers, or, as it was called at its muster, the California Regiment. On the 1st of July, 1861, this organization marched in column through the streets of Philadelphia *en route* to Fortress Monroe.

Authority having been further given to Colonel Baker to enlist a brigade, an invitation was given to the volunteer firemen of Philadelphia to recruit the second regiment of this command. With the public spirit for which they were renowned, and, aided by the young men of the city, the 72d Regiment, or Philadelphia Fire Zouaves,

commanded by Colonel D. W. C. Baxter, and numbering fifteen companies, was quickly recruited. Many of the officers were experienced in military drill; and serving as non-commissioned officers or as private soldiers, were large numbers of young, active, and patriotic men, and physically well fitted for the fatigues and duties of the soldier. Recruiting for the regiment was commenced on the 3d of August, 1861, and in one week the ranks were full. The officers were: De Witt Clinton Baxter, of Philadelphia, Colonel; Theodore Hesser, Lieutenant-Colonel; James M. De Witt, of the Chicago Zouaves, Major; Chas. W. West, Adjutant.

The first camp of rendezvous was near Haddington, West Philadelphia. To this place the new recruits were marched to be uniformed, equipped, and taught in the school of the soldier. So great, however, was the need of the Government for troops that a few days after the formation of a camp, on September 15, 1861, the regiment was ordered to move forward to Washington. Colonel Baxter, by direction of General Baker, ordered "the assembly" to sound, and the regiment paraded and formed a hollow square. In the centre mounted, and accompanied by his staff, was the venerable Edward D. Baker. With the right hands uplifted, and with uncovered heads, the Fire Zouaves swore to support the Government of the United States, and to obey the military orders of their commander; an oath that was to be sealed subsequently by the blood of many of the bright young soldiers who took the obligation. The scene was a memorable one, and has left impressions that time will not easily efface. The September evening's sun fell with gilded rays upon the lines of troops with their dark Zouave jackets, light blue trousers, and faultless white leggings, the magnificent stand of colors held aloft by the color guard, and the bright uniforms of the officers. As the mass of men surrounded their commander, and slowly and solemnly repeated his words, the sight was a picturesque one. Little did those who participated know that this gallant leader, the central figure of the group, would soon lie dead on the field at Ball's Bluff, with comrades of the brigade killed and wounded about him.

A few hours after this muster, the 72d Regiment at midnight marched through the streets of the city by the light of bonfires, and accompanied with ringing of fire bells and the plaudits of the citizens. Upon the arrival at Washington, the regiment was ordered to Chain Bridge, Virginia, and in two weeks after, although part of the command had not yet received arms, it was in the night advance upon Munson's Hill, memorable for the loss in killed and wounded in the

Philadelphia Brigade through a mistake on the part of some of the columns.

During the winter of 1861-62 the Fire Zouaves were engaged on picket duty along the Potomac, and in preparing for the struggle that was sure to come with the opening of spring. In March, 1862, the regiment formed part of General Banks's advance, crossing at Harper's Ferry and moving upon Winchester. A portion of the command was assigned to the duty of holding Charlestown, one of the officers being Provost Marshal. During this occupancy by the 72d the old jail of John Brown was used for the first time as a place of shelter for slaves escaping from their masters, and in strange contrast with its history the prison house of "the martyr" became the house of liberty to those for whom he perished.

Upon the termination of the forward movement of General Banks, the regiment was transferred with the Philadelphia Brigade to Fortress Monroe and the Peninsula. Under McClellan at Yorktown, during April, 1862, the duties of the siege brought the losses incidental to work in the trenches, and exposure to the continued fire of the enemy's sharpshooters and artillery. From Yorktown the campaign led to the swamps of the Chickahominy, where some of the best of the men perished with fevers, and died where there was—

"Lack of woman's nursing, and
dearth of woman's care."

The brigade at this time was commanded by General W. W. Burns, a regular army officer of great ability, who had succeeded the lamented General E. D. Baker. It was under his leadership that the Philadelphia Brigade entered battle as an entire command for the first time, May 31st, at Fair Oaks, Virginia. Frequently before this the men had been under fire either in companies or squads, but now, and from this time forth, the four Philadelphia regiments were destined to stand as comrades shoulder to shoulder on many a hard fought field, and it would be scarcely possible to write the history of one of these gallant regiments without at the same time relating the deeds of another. Fair Oaks, Seven Pines, Peach Orchard, Savage Station, Glendale, Malvern Hill, are battles in which all bore an honorable part and did a soldier's duty. General Burns wrote officially after the series of battles of the Peninsula campaign: "I am entirely satisfied with the conduct of my brigade. It has been christened under fire, and will do what is required of it."

The few words necessary to announce the transfer from the Peninsula by steamer to Alexandria, and thence onward to Centreville to

aid the army of General Pope, are but the frame to memory's picture. Dead comrades lay buried before Yorktown and Richmond, and there were gloomy forebodings of the conflicts to come. In spite of the discouragements, the gallant men of the regiment, though weary and footsore, suffering for want of ordinary soldier's food and clothing, struggled onward ever trying to follow their flag, which was never dishonored, toward the sound of the guns of the enemy. After Chantilly they formed part of the rear guard that covered the disheartened columns retiring upon Washington.

The battle of Antietam was fought Sept. 17, 1862. In this action the brigade, in the absence of General Burns, wounded, was commanded by General O. O. Howard. The 72d was moved in line of battle to the Hagerstown road near the historical Dunker Church. At this point General Sedgwick, the division commander, ordered the men to cross the road, enter the woods, and push forward. The order was promptly obeyed, and under severe fire, the regiment losing very heavily in the movement. Arriving at the very front and exposed to the fire of the enemy's batteries at short range, and within sight of the line, the men commenced firing as rapidly as they could load and aim, until General Sumner in person directed the regiment to retire to a better position to the right and rear.¹

The fall of 1862 was spent by McClellan in refitting the army, and, while the 2d Corps then laid about Harper's Ferry, the 72d Regiment was selected to furnish the provost guard of Bolivar, one of the line officers being detailed as marshal.

On the morning of December 11th the attack on Fredericksburg began, and it was nightfall, and after a heavy artillery fire and some fighting, that the pontoons were laid across the Rappahannock. The Philadelphia brigade, under command of General Joshua T. Owen,

¹ General Palfrey in "Antietam and Fredericksburg," Scribner series, in describing the battle of Antietam says: "The Philadelphia Brigade was the first to go." This statement is false, and without any justification for its utterance, and is the result of ignorance, carelessness, or wilful misrepresentation. The writer at the time referred to was a captain in the 72d Regiment serving with his company, and in the heat of the action heard General Sumner give the order. At first he was misunderstood, and the men were about to fix bayonets to charge, when the General repeated the order, adding, "you are in a false position," or words to that effect. Instead of being the "first to go," the men within the view of the writer were the last to leave the line. They retired to their new position, walking some distance backwards facing the enemy and carrying the 72d's flag with them.

was the first to enter the town by the bridge. The duty of driving the skirmishers of the enemy from the place was assigned to the regiment. After fighting from street to street, losing some men and capturing a portion of the Confederate guard, the work was accomplished. In the battle of the 13th the command was double-quickened early in the day to a position in front of Marye's house. Here the Irish brigade, after a gallant charge, had failed, and, to anticipate a counter charge from the enemy, the regiment, with the rest of the brigade, was ordered to lie down in readiness. This was one of the most difficult duties of a soldier. Lying in front of our own batteries, and facing those of the enemy, subject to the chance shots of one and targets for the other, the position was one of great exposure. In addition to this, the sharpshooters from Marye's Hill had the entire day for practice upon men who could not return the fire. The position was bravely held until midnight, when General Sykes's division of regulars relieved our troops.

In the Chancellorsville movements special duties were assigned the brigade. With a pontoon train and several pieces of artillery the command moved to Bank's Ford, drove back the pickets, laid a bridge, and upon the recrossing of General Sedgwick's corps at night, May 5th, formed an entire picket line about the corps. This position was held until all the corps had crossed, when the pickets silently withdrew, and the bridge was taken up.

From the Rappahannock to Gettysburg was a series of marches, counter-marches, and skirmishes. Some of these marches were forced and of unusual length, and it was a matter for congratulation when the 72d Regiment was massed in front of the position they were to hold at Gettysburg to find that but few had fallen by the way, and almost the entire command were present for duty and answered to roll call. The brigade was put into position by General Alexander S. Webb in command, on Granite Ridge, to the left of the cemetery, the 72d supporting Cushing's battery. In the afternoon, during the severe fight that followed the repulse of General Sickels, the regiment made a most gallant counter-charge, driving the enemy beyond the Emmetsburg road. In this action Colonel Baxter was severely wounded. On July 3d, during the morning, and through the terrific bombardment, the Fire Zouaves laid to the left of Brown's battery. When the enemy, under General Pickett, began to move forward to attack the position held by the Philadelphia Brigade, the regiment was moved by the flank to the ridge, directly in front of the point

assailed, and at once came under a heavy fire. The loss in killed and wounded was most severe; but the ground was nobly held, and, with the assistance of their comrades of the brigade and of the division, the attacking forces were shattered and their columns almost destroyed by the troops of the 2d Corps. This was the supreme effort of the rebellion. The Army of the Potomac gained imperishable honor, and no regiment or command can claim more than an equal share, but it can be written of the 72d "they did their duty, and their conduct was most satisfactory." In this action the regiment lost 46 killed and 146 wounded.

A sketch of scenes of war, covering over three years, cannot be condensed into a few short pages. "The march under Grant," the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, Richmond, all added to the glory of the flag. These names cannot be written, however, without recalling the roll of brave men "dead on the field of honor," or of sad mothers and relatives who were left to mourn the return of those who marched away from Philadelphia so full of life and hope on the Sunday night of September, 1861.

With a view of keeping these memories green, the "survivors of the 72d Regiment" determined to erect upon the field where the heaviest proportionate loss of the regiment was met, at Gettysburg, a massive monument. The material selected is rock from the battle field, fashioned after a handsome design by Wilson and Brother, of Philadelphia. The monument itself, a work of art, was cut and engraved by J. W. Flaherty, of Gettysburg. Three sides of the huge block, looking toward the position of the enemy, are rugged and quarry faced; the fourth is handsomely carved and polished, and has let into its face a fine bronze tablet, by Blake & Co., of Boston, containing this inscription:—

"The ground of the last assault.

THE PHILADELPHIA BRIGADE

Gen. Alexander S. Webb

held this angle July 2d and 3d 1863

Casualties in the battle 495.

THE 72D PA. VOLS.

'Philadelphia Fire Zouaves'

lost 10 officers and 182 men

out of 473 present for duty.

The Regiment erects this tribute
to the memory of fallen comrades."

In defraying the expenses of this elegant structure, liberal contributions were made by the members of the regiment, and they were nobly aided by many public spirited citizens.

The ceremony of dedication took place on the afternoon of August 27th, and the members of the regiment who were present were escorted by the Guard of Post 2 of Philadelphia, a delegation of the 106th Pennsylvania Volunteers, under General Lynch, and a large number of comrades from Posts of the Grand Army. The Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association was represented by Vice-President McCreery and Colonel Bachelder. After an address of reception by Mr. McCreery, the masterly oration of the day was delivered to an attentive and appreciative audience by General Alexander S. Webb, the brave and honored commander in the battle of Gettysburg.





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